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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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AFRICAN AMERICAN OFFICERS' ROLE
IN THE FUTURE ARMY

BY

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### JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES

# African American Officers' Role in the Future Army

Colonel Carrie W. Kendrick

May 1998

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## MILITARY FELLOW RESEARCH REPORT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9981 by President Harry S. Truman granting African Americans legal integration into all services, the U.S. Army continues to be lauded as the nation's leading agency in developing policies to ensure that all military personnel are given a fair and equal chance at advancement. However, this standing has recently come under scrutiny by the media and by senior African American officers. Army leadership, too, has taken a closer look at factors that affect minority advancement.

African Americans comprise 11 percent of the total officer corps. This number has remained constant over a three-year reporting period, according to the Defense Manpower Data Center, but the release of the army's Colonel (06) Board results for fiscal year 1998 highlighted an area of concern that seemingly had gone unnoticed. While the overall board selection rate was 39 percent, the African American selection rate was 19.1 percent, between 15 and 30 percent lower than in preceding years since 1993. In short, both test results and broader concerns suggest that the army's effort to fully integrate its officer corps has not been completely successful.

This document summarizes the findings of a nine-month study of the four areas that affect African American officers' progression up the ladder and the African American officer's role in the future Army. Original data for this study were obtained from two focus groups, comprising officers of various branches, ranks, and backgrounds, several informal interviews, and two surveys. The survey instruments were developed and administered separately—one survey for African American officers and one for white or majority officers. Over 200 surveys were distributed to African American officers, with 103 being completed. Of the completed surveys, 33 percent were from captains, 26.2 percent from majors, 35 percent from lieutenant colonels, and 5.8 percent from colonels. Over

100 surveys were distributed to white officers, with 54 being returned. Both surveys measured perceptions of policies affecting race relations, assignments, and progression. The focus groups in December and January were comprised of African American officers, eight officers participating in December and eighteen in January.

My research built on previous studies conducted by African Americans attending the U.S. Army War College, including past survey data. My findings amplify past findings and validate the concerns expressed elsewhere by African Americans in the army. Unfortunately, many areas of race relations previously identified as problems in the army remain so today. Based on my survey and focus group data, I would conclude that concerns among African Americans as to the future of their service to our nation and their ability to progress are quite serious.

I believe the problems highlighted in this report, if left untended, will erode the good reputation our army has long enjoyed. The African American must continue to be a part of this great institution and barriers to recruitment must be broken, lest we have an army with little to no diversity. While solutions to many issues cannot be quick, they are necessary. At some point, a task force may need to be formed that can more readily address the variables and offer workable solutions, which will require top-down directive and guidance. Hopefully, the information contained in this study can provide a framework for senior leaders and policy makers to use in bringing about much needed change.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

Dedicated service by African Americans in the nation's military is certainly not a new phenomenon. Indeed, five thousand fought in the American Revolution, at a time when our nation was not kind to them. Many then were mere slaves, men not expected to take up a cause and fight. As history reflects, the slave did fight, and honorably so.

The presence of the African American in shaping our nation led eventually to the signing of Executive Order 9981 by President Harry S. Truman on July 26, 1948. Even with the signing, change was slow to come and army leaders offered differing interpretations of what full integration and recruiting meant. For some time, the army felt segregation was both the most efficient and the fairest way to use black enlistees— "efficient" because it avoided the social disruptions that supposedly would accompany integration, and "fair" because it allowed blacks to compete for promotions with other blacks rather than with better-educated whites. With the Korean War, the army accelerated desegregation, and the last major all-black unit was deactivated in 1954. By the time we were engaged in Vietnam, the army was fully integrated in every field and specialty.

The same enthusiasm and willingness to serve in times past are present in our all-volunteer army today. The young African Americans who volunteer to serve this nation do so without reservation. Because of the reputation of our service, many black men and women choose to enlist today in spite of a black culture that often regards the military as an institution that harbors racial disharmony. Negative views may stem from contact with older veterans who served as far back as the Vietnam war and share stories of racial atrocities.

Is it possible that African American mothers and fathers today view the military as a whole as racist? The insight one can gain from a conversation with an older African American about military service is astonishing. African Americans who served during World War II and Korea tend to have a more

positive view of the military as an honorable profession. Those who served during Vietnam bring with them an entirely different perspective. The homefront during the Vietnam period left many African Americans confused and disillusioned, sentiments that may help account for the decline in African Americans' propensity to serve in the army.

A Joint Center study, African American Men and the U.S. Army:

Declining Propensity to Serve, found that "the drop in African American male propensity to serve in the Army does not appear to be the product of any single factor. Rather, it is the result of the convergence of several sets of forces—socio-economic and cultural factors, social and political change, and current perceptions of the Army." The effects on recruitment of this declining propensity were not clear, although the authors of the study concluded, "our judgment is that at current recruitment levels, lower black male propensity has little direct effect on recruitment. However, should personnel requirements increase significantly, it could make recruitment substantially more difficult and costly." It should be noted that while the propensity to serve is decreasing among African Americans, it is also decreasing among other groups as well.

The perception of an army that is racially biased has reemerged as a topic among both African Americans and other ethnic groups in the last few years. It is common in the army to find misunderstandings not only between racial groups but regarding all ethnic groups on the part of all other ethnic groups—in spite of the fact that programs exist to sensitize soldiers and leaders.

This study focuses only on African American officers. To those who ask why the focus was not on the entire minority population, including other ethnic groups, the answer is that the study had to be limited by the time available to do a concise and thorough analysis. An argument could be made that the challenges faced by African Americans are similar to those among other ethnic minority groups. Some similarities do exist, but there are many ways in which the various groups differ, and these affect their perceptions of and interactions with one

another. A proper study of every group would require that variables related to their specific values and circumstances be carefully considered. Even within the discussion of the challenges for the African American officer, I have had to limit my hypotheses to the accession and assimilation at the first assignment as a predictor of future success.

#### Overt Discrimination in the Army

In 1995, a Defense Equal Opportunity Council Task Force was formed to review discrimination and sexual harassment. Reviewing the army's history, the report notes that the army eliminated segregated all-black units in the late 1940s and early 1950s and by the mid-1950s had begun searching for desegregated schools for military dependents. By this period it also was fighting to end discrimination in the rental of off-base housing. In the mid-1960s, the army increased the accession rate of black officers. In the late 1960s it fought against outbreaks of racial violence by establishing education programs and improving promotion opportunities for minorities.

By the 1980s, the Task Force notes, many people, especially politicians, thought that they had eliminated racial problems, so efforts were relaxed and Equal Opportunity programs were de-emphasized. Unfortunately, as the Task Force notes, "discrimination against black military personnel has not gone away." After visiting several U. S. military bases in 1991, the chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights highlighted the finding of discrimination. At that time, they tied the findings on discrimination to low promotion rates and what were described as complaints about the administration of justice.

The Task Force rendered several conclusions pertaining to the receipt and processing of discrimination complaints. In its report of findings, it stated the following:

Investigation adequacy for complaints received were high. In areas where it was determined that investigations were inadequate, the task force noted the following deficiencies: (1) specific allegations

not addressed; (2) complainant or key witnesses not interviewed; (3) analysis of evidence inadequate; (4) reports contained opinions unsupported by evidence; and (5) corroborating testimony not sought.<sup>4</sup>

The army's program for ensuring equal opportunity for all its service members falls under the auspices of its Equal Opportunity Office. There are very specific requirements for oversight, monitoring the state of affairs, and subsequent reporting. AR 600-20, Command Program, outlines the specifics of the equal opportunity program. The policy states in part:

The policy of the U.S. Army is to provide equal opportunity and treatment for soldiers and their families without regard to race, color, religion, gender, or national origin and to provide an environment free of sexual harassment. This policy (1) applies both on and off post. (2) extends to soldiers and their families. (3) applies to soldiers working, living, and recreational environments (including both on- and off-post housing). Soldiers are not accessed, classified, trained, assigned, promoted, or otherwise managed on the basis of race, color, religion gender, or national origin except as - (1) the direct combat probability coding policy applies to women, (2) necessary to support established affirmative action goals.<sup>5</sup>

When asked in our own survey if they had been discriminated against, 57 percent of the African American officers responding indicated that they had been subjected to some form of racial discrimination. Those who reported being either overtly or subtly discriminated against, however, never filed equal opportunity or discrimination complaints. For purposes of reporting and oversight, a lack of reporting would suggest to army leadership that the race relations climate was healthy. When African American officers in our study were asked to explain the general failure to report incidents of what was described as subtle discrimination, they answered 100 percent of the time that they felt they would suffer some form of reprisal if they had raised any issues of discrimination.

_	Yes	No	No Response	N=
03 - Capt %	50.0	38.2	11.8	34
04 - Major %	55.6	14.8	29.6	27
05 - Lt Col %	75.0	13.9	11.1	36
06 - Col %	50.0	50.0	0.0	6

This reprisal comes in the form of labeling. The officer who makes a report is criticized as a non-team player, and labeled as disloyal to the commander or the unit. All of this carries a negative connotation in the traditions of the army. Officers are less likely to raise issues of racism or problems of discrimination for this very reason.

In one survey, a respondent stated a formal complaint was filed leading to the conduct of an investigation. The allegations were substantiated. The resolution was that the victims were allowed to move while the person found guilty of discriminating remained on the job in the same position. While the validity of this incident cannot be substantiated, a case could be made that, in general, feedback to the complainant is inadequate. If there was some reason for the outcome as described, affected parties should receive appropriate feedback. This eliminates damaging a command climate because of poor information flow.

#### Army Race Relations

Army race relations are a highly charged issue among today's officers.

Officers inside the army, serving at senior levels in key and significant positions, have publicly and almost unequivocally stated that they recognize problems exist and that we are not where we need to be in race relations. While such discussions

and debates ring loud within the corridors of the Pentagon, much to the chagrin of African American officers, little is actually being done to cause change.

What does the African American Officer say about the state of affairs for race relations in our army? The surveys administered as part of this study reveal that African Americans perceive the army as a biased institution that is only paying "lip-service" to programs and policies designed to ensure equal opportunity for all. Generally, the feeling is one that assignments and jobs are not equitably managed by personnel managers and socialization and assimilation by leadership are not a priority.

What does the white officer say about the state of affairs in the army regarding matters of race relations? In the survey administered to white officers, 62 percent responded that less qualified African Americans were promoted ahead of more qualified white officers. (At the same time, only 21 percent said they had been personally affected by such promotions.) This group also felt that problems of racism exist in the officers' corps. The 19-question survey was administered to majority officers in the 1998 War College Class and participants at the Army Personnel Command. The frankness of these respondents, whose privacy must be maintained, is greatly appreciated—their cooperation provides the basis for documenting in this study the belief system that exists. Of the 19 questions, 9 are considered salient for the purposes of this paper. The following table shows the percent responses to these questions.

Looking over these responses, one is forced to ask — What has caused both groups to adopt such views? Should we be concerned that such negative views as are shared are potentially damaging to an institution whose mission is one of fighting wars and which has the noble distinction of being the leading service in matters of race relations and equal opportunity?

To put these issues in context, it might help to know what and how Americans as a whole view matters of race relations, since this may account for similar views among officers in the army. In its 1997 national poll, the Joint

White Officers' Responses to Survey						
	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree	
"Army's policy on affirmative						
actions has unfairly advanced						
minorities over more qualified	22	20	4	34	0	
majorities."	33	29	4	34	U	
"African Americans receive						
preferential treatment and						
assignment."	8	10	50	27	5	
"Institutional discrimination	•					
exists in the Army."	57	33	0	10	0	
caises in the miny.	٠,		•		-	
"The Army does not have a						
problem with racism or racist						
attitudes among the officer			_	20	^	
population."	44	12	5	39	0	
"African American officers				•		
who attend historically black						
colleges and universities do not						
perform well in the Army."	18	9	60	13	0	
"African American officers are						
more likely to seek out the						
mentorship and advice of		*				
another African American						
officer."	88	2	0	10	0	
"There is no racism in the						
Army."	0	9	8	25	58	
am,	· ·	•	•			
"I have personally been						
affected by assignment and						
promotion inequities because						
less qualified African	o	12	0	20	41	
Americans were advanced."	8	13	U	38	41	
"I am sensitive to issues						
affecting the morale of African						
American Officers."	18	82	0	0	0	

Center for Political and Economic Studies included a series of questions on race relations. The report that outlined the findings from this poll stated the following:

From the perspective of public opinion, the state of race relations in the United States remains troubled. Black and white perception of racial reality-while occasionally convergent-are for the most part quite different. Generally, whites believe some level of discrimination against black Americans remains common; the situation for black Americans is either the same as or better than it was five years ago...moreover, they feel that blacks who cannot get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition, and preferential treatment should not be extended to black Americans.<sup>6</sup>

The black 'reality' was summarized as follows:

Blacks believe that somewhere between 'some' and 'a lot of' discrimination against black Americans is common...the situation is the same as five years ago; they do not believe they are responsible for not being able to get ahead.<sup>7</sup>

While survey questions given to army officers for this study were not identical with those of the Joint Center's 1997 national poll, the respondents' answers reflected views that diverged similarly along racial lines.

#### The Racial Make-up of Officer Ranks

As the army continues its efforts at downsizing, ensuring the appropriate specialty and rank, mix remains a top priority. Meeting the demands of today's army, the officer corps currently totals 67,723 men and women, of which African Americans comprise 11 percent (7,441). The greater preponderance of officers serve at the grade of captain. This is to be expected based on the time in grade officers serve (approximately seven years). As one moves higher in grade, the African American percentages decline at a much higher rate than those of white officers. (See figure 1.) From the eligible population of officers, the decline is most apparent between the ranks of major and lieutenant colonel (a drop of 49 percent). For whites, the decline of eligible officers for the same rank and grade is

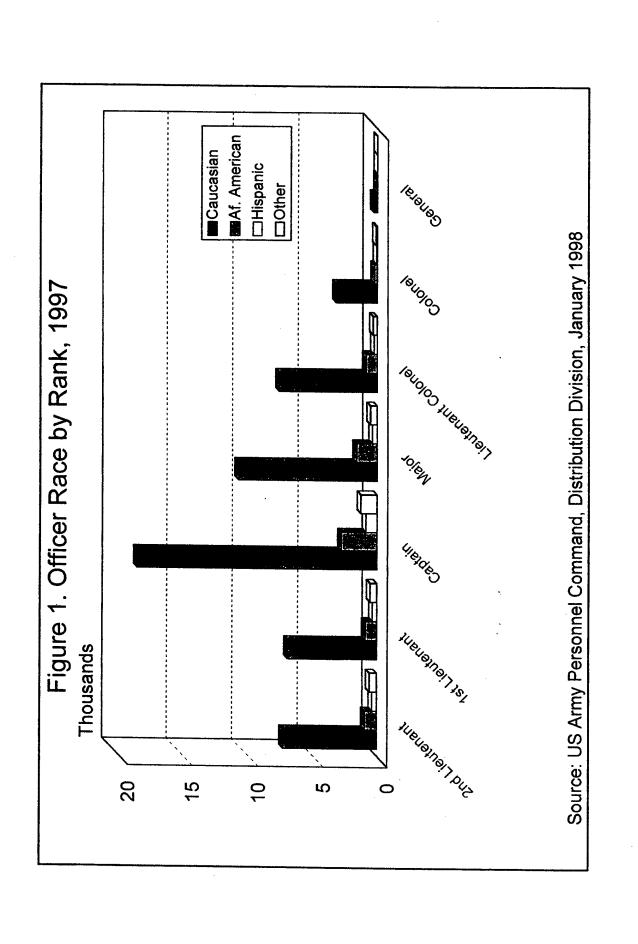
only 29 percent. The attrition rate of African American officers is almost twice that for Caucasian officers, a fact that may be attributable to the low percentage of officers at senior grades.

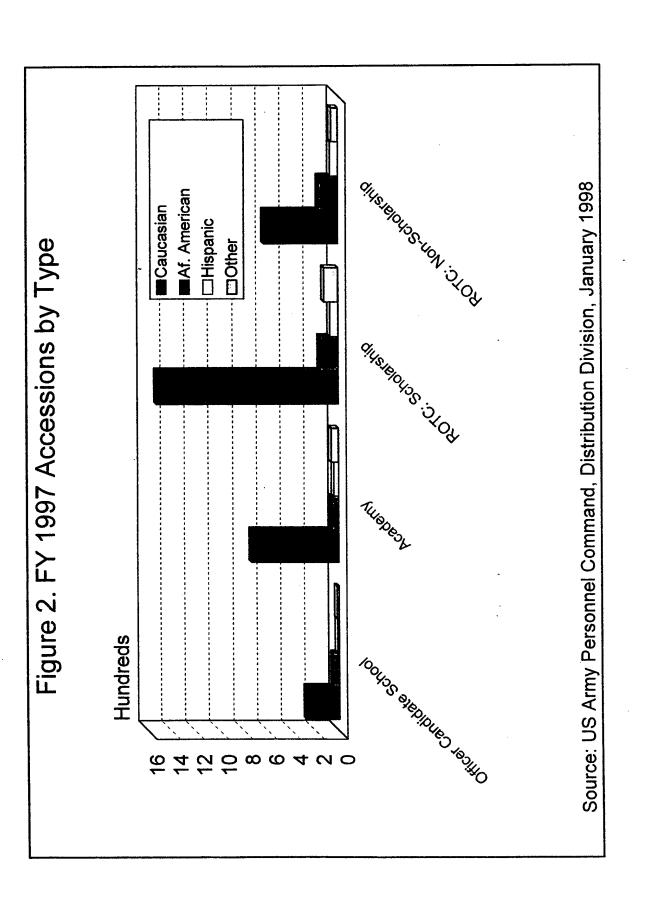
The Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC) is the largest producer of new officers in the army. This preparatory phase is crucial because it charts the course for future progression. Requirements at the entry level far exceed those required as an officer advances through the ranks. The active duty entry rate for African Americans in FY1997 was 9.3 percent of all officers coming into the ranks. In FY1995, African Americans accounted for 10.1 percent of total accessions. These recent army accession rates are lower than the percentage African Americans in the overall officer population (11 percent).

The data also reflect the fact that whites are more likely to attend ROTC as scholarship recipients than are African Americans. There is relatively little difference between the percentage of African Americans who have received scholarships and the percentage of those who have not when compared with their enrollment in ROTC. In contrast, whites receiving scholarships made up 60 percent of the overall ROTC population.

In 1997, there were 3,637 officers accessed into the officer's corps, of whom 516 were African American (see figure 2). Among that group, 393 attended non-HBCUs while 123 attended HBCUS. HBCU accessions are less than 50 percent in the overall representation of the officer population. While the perception exists that the larger population of African American officers are graduates of HBCUS, the data do not support this supposition. In fact, HBCU accessions are 3 percent of the overall new second lieutenant population, and 25 percent of African American second lieutenants.

The entire process of army integration and equal opportunity is only 50 years old. America, as a nation, took longer than that to recognize the humanness of the slave and even longer to grant full constitutional rights to them. As our





army continues to change, and downsizing becomes right sizing, the African American officer must remain a viable part of that change.

#### 3. THE EVOLVING ARMY

#### Tomorrow's Army

Force XXI will transform the army. As we move into a new millennium, the Force XXI concept will help us meet the changing demands of our world. It will yield two sequential military products: Army XXI, directing the efforts through 2010, and the Army After Next (AAN) from 2010 to 2025. Army planners recognize the window of opportunity that is before us now, at a time when the U.S. is without military peer and our ability to capitalize and be proactive rather than reactive is pronounced.

The Force XXI process was initiated in 1994 to develop an understanding of the changing nature of land warfare and to make decisions about how the army should change in response to the changing geostrategic environment. According to a recent army planning document, "The Force XXI process must also ensure the army maintains the synchronized balance among the six fundamental imperatives —quality people, training, leader development, doctrine, force mix and modem equipment."

The U.S. Army is the strongest army in the world. Its might can be measured in terms of the country's resolve to ensure that an army exists which can, as a primary mission, defend this great nation. Not only is it measured in these resolute terms, but also in the capabilities of its equipment, personnel, and leadership. A strong army without people who are committed to its goals and a caring and concerned leadership, is an army whose might may as well not exist. In a report to Congress, former Secretary of the Army Togo West stated, "We continue to enjoy success in attracting and retaining high quality recruits. Today's soldiers are the best educated and well disciplined in our history."

In *Army Vision 2010*, the future is addressed in the following terms: The future will demand more. The modality of agility will be even more essential to our ability to adapt to a dynamic strategic

environment. We will need to continuously leverage technology to ensure our force has the requisite advantage to preclude conflict if possible, but to win decisively if necessary, and to leverage the capabilities of our allies and coalition partners ... and the diverse missions being assigned to the Army will require men and women of intelligence and dedication, in the active and reserve component.<sup>10</sup>

In simple terms, the goal for Army XXI is information dominance. We are building a future army that will be able to conduct and sustain operations on land throughout the spectrum of conflict.

Army Vision 2010 describes a capabilities-based army with the proper mix of heavy, light, and Special Operations Forces (SOF) focused on the Euro-Middle East and Asian Arc regions of the world—a force trained, ready, and equipped to conduct full-spectrum operations, to do what needs to be done across the entire spectrum of crisis:

The Army in 2010 will be a Total Quality Force consisting of dedicated men and women, military and civilian, in both the active and reserve components. Along the way, we will team with private industry and the academic community at every opportunity as a means of assuring future vitality in the science and technology base, the industrial base, and the power projection base of our Army.<sup>11</sup>

To meet the requirements of our Joint 2010 doctrine, the information dominance piece is key. While, much will change in the army's fighting technology, its commitment to total quality personnel will remain strong. Military academies and colleges and universities across our country will continue to be the largest source of education personnel selected to lead and guide our army. The needs of the army will determine the accessions mix requirements.

While progress continues and equipment upgrades are made, the one constant need is for people. Equipment is programmable and usually predictable. People, on the other hand, are not as predictable and their needs place the greatest demand on an organization. The drawdown of the army after the fall of the Berlin

Wall was evidence that the senior leadership's resolve concerning people issues was very high. That has not changed. Every army chief of staff has been committed to ensuring that morale among its members remain high.

According to the Army After Next plans, mental and physical agility are the central theme that must characterize our army to ensure its effectiveness in 2025. While Army XXI will meet the needs of the first two decades of the 21st century, after this point it is likely that a competitor (a country whose military capabilities match or exceed our own), will have emerged. This will require increased capabilities for weapons' systems and the introduction of new equipment.

According to *Army Vision 2010*, "Mental agility, the most valued inheritance from Army XXI, sets the conditions for the Army's use of space and near-space forces, affects operational decision making, and helps redefine the training- and education of Army leaders and soldiers." The same requirements for Army XXI will be necessary for the Army After Next. Let us therefore turn our focus to the people side of Force XXI. Embedded in this portion, we can glean the desired skills and expectations of tomorrow's army leaders.

#### Tomorrow's Officer

The chief of staff describes our soldiers as "our credentials." It is true, people are our greatest resource. Preliminary work has begun to define the desired skills of tomorrow's leader and soldier. In a recent paper, the Personnel Action Officer for AAN states that "issues of diversity will become more dominant for the Army After Next." Why? The demographics of America are changing. The majority in America will no longer be Caucasian. There will be a greater challenge to traditional leading and thinking. We are beginning to see some generational differences now. Lieutenant General (Retired) Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., describes leadership in the 21st-Century in these words: "The purpose of leadership is to get the job done. Competent military leaders develop trust,

focus effort, clarify objectives, inspire confidence, build teams, set the example, keep hope alive, and rationalize sacrifice."<sup>14</sup>

Will tomorrow's leader look, act, and perform differently than today's leader? With more unit autonomy, leadership is likely to differ. The direct leadership style that is more personal and places the leader in more of a teaching role will be replaced by a more indirect style in which decisions made at the lowest level will be more the norm than the exception. There will be fewer options and alternatives. According to army planners, equipment that once required five or more to operate may soon require no more than one or two. The expansion of information technology could result in remotely piloted weapons platforms whose only human requirement during operation would be for oversight. In some circles, this is a bit unnerving, but today's young person relates well to the technological advances we are making as an army.

Personnel planners are also supposing the following, according to a report by Lt. Col. Rick Ballard, a recent Joint Center Military Fellow:

It is reasonable to anticipate that by 2020, artificial intelligence will dominate most our logistical vehicles, particularly refuelers and bulk carriers. Within five years after this (2025), combat maneuver formations could contain leaders in command and control vehicles directing composite units of both dismountable soldiers and robotically controlled systems platforms. The latter, in particular, will be directed into high-risk scenarios, such as crossing contaminated or mined areas, performing point and flank reconnaissance, and directing weapons' effects against targets. Leaders will thus have to be able to simultaneously direct soldiers and manage intricate systems, creating a much more complex requirement for systems and human resource integration. 15

There is some expectation that the type of soldier we will require will change as well. One scenario speaks of a highly skilled population with an advanced level of technical information management knowledge. This is not surprising in light of the anticipated information-dominance army. Skill and

training in electronic warfare as well as some college education are likely requirements at the entry level for enlisted soldiers. With such a high-tech soldier requirement, there will be greater leadership skill requirements.

The Officer Personnel Management System XXI (OPMS XXI) began the process to develop the force needed for the future army. This process is evolutionary and will change the traditional accession and specialty designation for individual officers. The highly held belief that the only officers who can progress are those who have served primarily in tactical units will no longer hold true under the newly designed system. Technocrats and soft-skills experts will have a reasonable opportunity to advance.

Ulmer further states that "adjustments in the education system from what to learn to how to learn are needed. Current thinking at the Army War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces have focused more attention on 'thinking skills' in their introductory courses ... case studies in leadership and management need to substitute for some repetitious tactical scenarios. Excellent tactics will not compensate for lack of perspective in leadership in either preparing or employing military units."<sup>16</sup>

In its Army Plan (TAP-00-15), the army has outlined the following:

To capitalize on technological advances, there will be a premium on mature, experienced, tactically proficient leaders and soldiers with exceptional degrees of mental agility and psychological resilience. Future leaders must understand:

Interpersonal Relations - treating others with dignity and respect; possessing conflict-management skills.

Information Systems - being able to understand and apply technologies.

People and Cultures - maintaining a broad appreciation of other cultures; having a language proficiency; demonstrating awareness of family, social, and cultural problems; displaying political acumen.

Strategy, Operations, and Tactics - appreciating strategic and operational implications of tactical situations.

How to *Influence* others - applying effective indirect leadership; quickly assessing and shaping organizational culture; rapidly building teams.

Interagency - coordination and processes. 17

Should we be concerned with the developing Force XXI Army and where the African American officer will fit? In today's army, the black officer is not progressing at an equal or near-equal level with his or her white counterpart. Until this inequity is resolved, we may find considerable underrepresentation in our ranks in the army of the future. One need only ask the question, whether the African American officer will face a greater challenge in the future army, considering the problems that are present today.

#### 4. STUDY FINDINGS

After an exhaustive review of survey data, formal and informal interviews, focus groups, and past studies, four areas were identified as primary determinants of success for officers in the pipeline. The four areas are (1) education and army culture, (2) initial assignment, (3) early assignments, and (4) mentoring. When I began this study, I was already familiar with perceptions among the African American officer population from my own personal experiences and those as relayed to me by numerous African American officers during my twenty years of service. While I had personally witnessed problems that were clearly tied to individuals' levels of preparation, a large part of my own outlook had been shaped by subtle forms of discrimination—whether intentional or unintentional—that could not be proven. The burden of turning up proof always rests with the individual. Recognizing the need that something had to be done and that we clearly needed to address this issue, I began the research to produce a study that would highlight an initial focus. As the study progressed, it became more apparent that the detail required to address each issue sufficiently was not within this study's scope or timeframe. Nevertheless, the aforementioned four areas were determined to be the most important in what I might describe as the first step toward fixing a systemic problem.

#### Focus Group Results

In December 1997 and January 1998, we assembled two focus groups attended by African American officers from the local Military District of Washington, Personnel Command, Army Joint Staff, and other supporting agencies. Combat Arms, Combat Support Arms, and Combat Service Support Arms were represented as were officers in the grades of 01-06. The focus groups provided input on strategies for success, barriers as they currently see them, and army culture and mentoring.

The most divergent views resulted from generational differences. Officers with 18 or more years of service held widely different views from those with less service. This might be attributed to the fact that younger officers, feeling they remain valued by the institution, desire changes that can benefit the whole, while more senior officers, having passed through various gates, have a view more concerned with retirement. The more senior an officer, the less likely the individual was to "rock" the boat or express views contrary to existing policy or guidance. Many in this older category view their position as one of survival, i.e., "I made it and times were a lot harder back when." The two age groups agreed that all bore the brunt of system inefficiencies in the primary document (Officer Efficiency Report) which communicates to promotion boards an officer's potential to serve at the next higher grade.

Company grade officers and young field grades (majors) represented the most vocal group. A large portion of junior officers had been or were assignment officers, while others held key personnel (nominative) positions. Because the focus-group was made up of apparently successful officers, the credibility of their responses need not be doubted. The thoughts shared in the focus group sessions were candid and forthright, and the individuals attending hoped the army policy makers would give them serious review and consideration. The following synopsis reflects what the officers had to say:

#### On mentoring:

- The army should define "formal mentoring" and the expected role of mentors. (Aside from the expected mentor role of the supervisor when conducting formal counseling).
- Mentorship in the army is lacking.
- Mentorship should begin before the first assignment, at the educational institution, by officers on staff at the ROTC department.

• The United States Military Academy (USMA) has a formal mentor program. While not all Academy graduates reach the pinnacles of the army's career ladder, their initial assimilation is easier because of the preparation.

#### On education and training:

- African Americans view professorships in Military Science at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as a last-stop job. West Point assignments, in comparison, are career enhancers.
- The assignment and training process are different for the USMA instructor and tactical officer as compared to that for the faculty assigned to HBCUs. The results of this are inadequately trained and prepared ROTC graduates.
- Officers should be targeted for success while in ROTC. Begin the mentoring process there and make discussion of army culture second nature. Since the officer comes into the pipeline at this point, development and indoctrination are crucial. Officers should be set up for success instead of failure, and every effort should be made to develop competitive officers prepared to assume positions of greater responsibility.

#### On general discussion topics:

- The army leadership pays "lip service" to programs designed to ensure equal opportunity and affirmative actions. Rarely does a senior officer weigh in to support the progression of a minority officer by requesting him or her by name.
- The need to prove oneself is becoming more the norm. African Americans are not given the same counsel as other officers.
- The new Officer Efficiency Report (OER) could have a more negative effect on minority officers than on others. This may be complicated by the

belief some white officers have that African Americans will succeed and be promoted because of the affirmative action guidelines provided to promotion boards. This belief is not grounded in facts, nor is it supported by promotion and selection board statistics.

- Senior white officers will balance their rating profiles using the African American officer with a greater preponderance rated as center of mass or below. The new report is merely the same tool as the old report, but with a greater likelihood that more (and not fewer) African Americans will receive an average rating.
- There should be a yearly review, where an assessment is made of the senior rater's pattern of rating, if any, by race and gender.
- The army must define what it means by institutional discrimination and remove the subjectivity of constantly shifting interpretations.
- The army culture defined: The culture is white-male and so is its policy setting agenda. The army lacks any real diversity management. The army is whoever fills the top leadership, policy-making positions.
- A great deal of time is spent defending the placement of black officers in key jobs and assignments to various locations.
- African American officers have been given Officer Efficiency Reports
  rating them average in comparison to their counterparts and have then
  been told by the rating official that promotion boards would give them the
  benefit of the doubt because of affirmative action (not valid). (Examples
  of this were cited by many focus group attendees.)
- The internal "manner of performance" designation given by assignment officers (normally captains to lieutenant colonels) is biased, a subjective evaluation. The performance file is reviewed and a rating annotated but there is no quantitative review and neither is there a system for review by someone other than the assignment officer. While on the surface this may appear insignificant, these subjective evaluations determine whether

officers are recommended for jobs at the Secretariat, Joint, Congressional or White House level. The so-called high-visibility positions (aides to senior military and civilians) almost always require files where the manner of performance designation is in the top 50 percent. (Note: Of all the data requests made for analysis and review for this study, only manner-of-performance information was denied).

• "By-name" requests for white officers are the norm. African American by-name requests are the exception.

#### Past War College Studies

Why is there such a need to write about the African American officer in the army? In past War College classes, African American officers have written similar studies under various titles, but all addressing the same general theme: Why African Americans are not progressing at a rate commensurate with their white counterparts. I reviewed five of these studies. Past surveys attempted to measure perceptions, standards, assimilation and mentorship. Many work hours have been spent compiling what most authors hoped would not get ignored. Having spoken with the authors of these studies, I can attest that they all remain interested in working with the army leadership to chart a course toward better preparing the African American officer for future successes.

There is a shared general feeling among those who write about the subject that the African American commissioned officer's place in our army is a vital one. The leadership sentiments are the same. The authors, collectively, want to find solutions to address perceptions of inequity. They agree in noting that inter-group feelings among the diverse ethnic/racial groups are unhealthy and lead to feelings of disdain and lack of trust. These attitudes, they argue, will remain prevalent until common understanding is obtained.

Rates of progression among African American officers today have slowed to near disastrous levels. The release of the fiscal year 1997 Colonels Board

results highlighted what might be viewed as inattention to policies designed to afford all officers a fair and equitable chance to succeed. The board selected 388 personnel, of which only 17 were African Americans. The rate of selection here points to a major oversight in our system. There have been many conclusions drawn about what may have happened. One conclusion that has come under fire is the notion that African American files did not support their selection nor did they meet the fully-qualified requirement. Even if this were the case, it would not negate the possibility of institutional discrimination. The army has grappled with the definition of institutional discrimination for at least 13 years. A case might be made that a pattern of assignment inequity is at fault, as well as a lack of careerenhancing jobs. This year's results may even require a review of the files of officers rated by the same individual. Whatever analysis is undertaken, it has to be more than a cursory review.

A 1996 study by Colonel Remo Butler, a student at the Army War College, might have brought to our attention some areas that required overhaul. In his study, "Why Black Officers Fail," Butler (an African American officer) writes of two chief areas affecting the African American officer's success, namely, job assignments and cultural differences. Butler points out that senior African Americans attending his class felt very strongly about the preparation officers receive before entry to active duty. Progression and success were tied to one's academic institution, specifically, graduates of West Point and non-HBCU institutions performed better than those from HBCUS. Adapting to army culture was viewed as another area causing problems for African Americans.

Butler's paper attempted to point out the differences as viewed by the races and to help highlight where the focus of our efforts should be. He hypothesized that a lack of cultural understanding on the part of both whites and blacks was the primary cause of black officers' failing promotions.

Another student in the same Army War College class (1997), Craig Johnson, concluded in his study that while "the army offers the finest professional

development any corporate institution can provide," unresolved issues identified in his study have negative strategic implications.<sup>18</sup> That is, having insufficient numbers of African American officers may prevent us from building the necessary force mix to accomplish future missions. Johnson points out that the glass ceiling is a factor and that perceived racism, harassment, and discrimination have impacts. Indeed, 85 percent of the individuals responding to his survey indicated they experienced military-related discrimination. Another factor was a nonsupportive work environment; subordinates showed less respect to minority officers than to majority officers. Johnson also found that black officers feel that their opportunities for advancement are not commensurate with those of majority officers. The officer's evaluation report (the old DA 67-8) was a tool viewed as a bias factor.<sup>19</sup>

While the studies by these African American researchers differ in many respects from one another, the similarities cannot be understated. I will go as far as to say that each senior African American concluded by reaching the same basic position. The credibility of the information may continue to be questioned; however, at some point in the very near future, these issues will need to be addressed. Findings and conclusions reached in my study do not differ significantly from those in the studies just described.

#### Army Culture

Army culture is a long-standing tradition of values and principles that differ, to some degree, from those held by the rest of society. The culture of the army is first of all one that revolves around the warrior ethos. On more than one occasion and in several forums and publications, we have heard our army chief of staff state that the army exists to fight and win our nation's wars. There is no comparable institution in civilian society.

Cultural differences were highlighted in the paper by Colonel Butler as a reason black officers fail. These differences were highlighted again during our

focus group. To achieve success and desired outcomes, there should be some similarities between the values of the army and those of the individual. When there are competing values, the organizational values normally take precedence.

The thinking of any soldier/officer has to be one that is "duty, honor; country" oriented. Anything less could be ingredients for disaster if we found ourselves in an armed conflict. The people expected to execute the mandates associated with fighting and winning our nation's wars make up a diverse force of not only white officers, but African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, etc. The military culture is an evolving one but there still remain basic values that guide every soldier. Among them are: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless-service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

The current army chief of staff, General Dennis Reimer, understands the significance of army culture. In remarks made after the Advanced Warfighting Experiment at the National Training Center in the spring of 1997, he commented that the experiment was not necessarily about technology, although that was an important part of it. "It is about changing an Army ... [and] most of all changing the culture." Culture, as we know it, is shaped by factors both external and internal. Army culture disallows many practices that are permitted in the civilian work force, e.g., variation in the manner of dress, accessories, standards for hair, and experimentation with fads. For the African American officer, this can be like stepping into a time warp.

When an African American second lieutenant steps out of college into a new, totally different military culture, there are assimilation challenges.

Transition into the army is eased for new officers when they come from a military background (e.g., a military child) or have attended one of the army's military institutes or the Academy. An awareness of the army culture is more apparent with these groups. African Americans are not the only group that suffers from culture differences. While the transition is eased for the named categories, there remains some anxiety for every student in the officer basic course, except possibly

for the officer who graduated from officer candidate school and also had prior enlisted service.

"Who talked with you about Army culture when you were a new lieutenant?"					
	Male %	Female %			
Sr. Officer	34.9	47.1			
Peer	12.8	0.0			
NCO	12.8	5.9			
Parent	1.2	5.9			
No One	33.7	29.4			
Other	0.0	11.8			
n/a	1.2	0.0			
Missing	3.5	0.0			
N =	86	17			
African American Officer Response to Survey, 1998					

Many practices that are commonplace in campus life are not for army life. One that draws much negative attention (needlessly so) is continued affiliation with black fraternities. The culture of the army is one where unit cohesion and teamwork within a given unit are felt to have a stronger link than outside associations. These links and ties are necessary, since the army is about team building. Teams live together, work together and, ideally, play together. The conflict arises more from a lack of understanding of the individual culture and how that impacts the organizational culture. Ideally, both cultures should merge without disruption and build a strong and cohesive unit. To a lesser degree, we have also seen conflict arise over African American female officers' association with sororities. While the culture of the army does not publicly voice disdain, the

number of queries made by white officers adds validity to an unspoken concern. This is an area where education of white officers is insufficient.

In a recent pre-command course in which I was a student, the presenter asked officers a number of questions regarding practices exclusive to a particular ethnic group, e.g., "What is meant by playing the dozens?" and "What is dapping?" The discussion addressed concerns the army must resolve, specifically problems in race relations. The presenter's discussion went full circle, and in the end, he spoke to the lack of basic understanding on the part of a large segment of the officer population. The point was used to drive home cultural differences of various ethnic groups. The group was challenged to study culture rather than reach a negative conclusion or view differences in cultural behavior as offensive or frightening.

During the conduct of our January focus group, African American officers were asked from whom they learned about the army culture. While the most common response was "a senior officer," African American males were just as likely to say "no one." (See table on preceding page.) One officer recalled his experience in the following manner.

Officer basic had been a struggle. I found the classwork and people to be extremely cautious when dealing with many of the African brothers and sisters. In fact, to approach a group, in an attempt to assimilate (I'd been told I needed to do this), I found that the conversation became extremely forced. Prior to my approach, there was laughter and discussion and I only wanted to be a part of that and really be accepted. I found the conversation would turn to inquisition ... Where did you go to school?' 'Where is that located?' 'Are your parents professionals?' 'How did you get this branch? 'Whom do you know?'

I was absolutely mystified. I quickly found that the answers to these and many other probing questions would determine my worth in the group. I also found they were not interested in my assimilation; they were friendly, but, we were not going to move much farther than that. Now, I have always prided myself in getting along with people, but I never knew I would have to break down what I considered the 'race' barrier in the army.

I thought it was one army.

The same interaction was prevalent among the staff and faculty at the school. I never quite felt I belonged. This was when we (my African American peers) started to get together to try to figure out what needed to be done. Most of the social functions at the home of senior officers were traditional at best. We/I was told how important it was to attend the socials. Even while present at the home of senior officers, the pecking order of who was important was again reinforced.

I spoke with my other 'buddies' and they relayed similar information. I asked 'when will we be told about the army?' I am getting this book stuff—I know it's important, but I was told there was so much more. I graduated and did not feel the camaraderie I was told to expect.

Upon arrival in my unit, the other lieutenants were boasting of their achievements and most took the time to tell me about whom they knew and where they came from, but very little about the job and the army culture. My battalion commander pointed out to me that he had over 60 percent West Point graduates and to meet their level of performance, I had my work cut out for me. A couple of African American non-commissioned officers showed me the ropes. I am forever grateful to them.

While many would say this example is an anomaly, other participants present at the focus group echoed much the same sentiment. They spoke of the 'great divide.' In fact, their discussions of mentor/protégé relationships they felt had been strained because of race. Many of the participants stated that their leaders, while they talked with them, spoke in very nebulous terms and often in a manner that was not a guiding/coaching style. When their counseling was compared with that of their peers, they were often astonished at the differences.

It's important in culture development to understand that people are different and that the understanding of what makes us different is the heart and soul of the army. Differences are good and we have been successful leading soldiers from different and various backgrounds and cultures. Basic values are those we all come to know and embody as officers of the army regardless of our

differences. The various ethnic cultures we bring, with us enhance our existence as an army. The differences are not offensive or demeaning and are not meant to be so, nor are they likely to go away, though they may be altered somewhat. Alteration or adaptation is really the key to survival and success. Alteration is not bad. African Americans succeed because they do alter their behavior to take on the organizational culture. The same is not always true of our counterparts.

#### Initial Assignment and ROTC Instruction

The second area thought to be important in the development of the army officer is the officer's initial assignment after the completion of the basic course. The preparatory phase for a college student entering the army is as a cadet in the ROTC department, just as for others it is the Academy. The early development in shaping one's thinking about the army is crucial in this phase. An argument often raised today is that there are racial disparities in the assignment of officers as ROTC instructors.

An age-old debate that rings loud and has damaged the morale of many African Americans is the question of whether one's success is tied to the academic institution one attended. When an inconsistency in performance is noted in a young officer who has graduated from an HBCU, deficiencies are alleged in his or her cadet training. Is it myth or reality that the preparation to enter active duty varies in quality depending on the source of commission?

You will get varied responses to this question. Academic preparation might be less responsible for one's success in the army than the training and preparation offered by the ROTC program. For a college student who is also a cadet, the training is two-fold. One's success depends on both academic and basic military preparation. An ROTC cadet does not graduate and receive a commission unless the requirements of the academic curriculum have been met along with the ROTC requirements. As with any curriculum and teaching style, ROTC taught at different institutions varies, and the effectiveness of the program

goes back to the individual instructor despite the uniform program of instruction.

What are the selection criteria for ROTC instructors assigned to teach at HBCUs? What are the selection criteria for the instructor assigned to teach at West Point? Personnel at PERSCOM have told the author that assignment training requirements differ depending on the institution. Moreover, the institution, not the army, sets basic faculty standards. The army has not amplified the standards to ensure consistency of quality.

When an officer is assigned to West Point as an instructor or tactical officer, an advanced degree is a requirement, not an option. If a selected officer does not already hold a masters degree or lacks a specific degree required by West Point, the army pays full tuition for the officer's graduate education. This is not true of the ROTC program. The president of the sponsoring college or university sets the minimum requirements, even if she or he has very little or no military affiliation. You will find a myriad of variances between these schools. While all professors of military science at university ROTC programs are advanced degree holders, there is no requirement that other associated ROTC faculty be so qualified. I could not find an instance where the army has supplemented the institution's requirements for ROTC faculties.

Nevertheless, supplemental requirements may be advisable when the baseline education required to enter the army and what is really needed to be successful are not equal. The importance of the instructor in ROTC must not be underestimated given the expectation to prepare officers so they are on an equal playing field with graduates of any military institution. ROTC instructors provide more to the individual officer than traditional learning. Their role is that of educating college students to transition from the civilian lifestyle to that of a mature, well-rounded army officer who is likely to lead some of our nation's sons and daughters into battle. Additionally, they are expected to provide the student with the necessary tools to diminish the notion that they are not equally prepared.

Despite this important role, the ROTC personnel mix at HBCUs is not

representative of the real army. I was surprised to find that majority officers, for the most part, are not assigned to HBCUs. Of the 21 HBCU ROTC programs, only six of the universities have assigned a white officer at the grade of captain. (One program, West Virginia State, had only white officers assigned. This university, however, is only classified as an HBCU for historic reasons and no longer has a majority-black student population.)

ROTC programs at HBCUs require minor overhaul. The primary emphasis has to be on the instructors' selection process. The perception that ROTC instructors at HBCUs do not have the same educational background as those assigned to West Point is certainly correct. Likewise, a higher percentage of officers assigned as instructors at West Point and selected for Command and Staff College are promoted compared to those who receive assignment instructions to HBCUs. Our most important resource, people, suffers when quality of instruction/instructors is mediocre. This fact does not imply that an advanced degree is a predictor of success. It does, however, imply that if education for one segment of trainers (West Point) is critical, then it is important for the entire officer population. This particular area requires more monitoring and review to determine the full extent of the problem.

What is important to the officer after the preparatory phase? Officers responded in the survey that socialization and an understanding of army culture were most important. Many felt their lack of understanding of army culture resulted in needless and unnecessary conflict after entering active duty. The technical and tactical training are mastered because of the systems in place to ensure inspections, internal reviews, and the like. For the intangible side of training, this is not always the case. As reflected by the comments shared during the focus group and in responses to the survey, the most challenging part for most officers was the lack of a mentor in developing those intangible skills—what we have all come to know as "learning the ropes."

Many survey respondents stated they felt ill-prepared to enter active duty

and lacked confidence in reporting to their first assignment. This belief, for the most part, had little to do with the actual training received and more to do with the lack of comfort associated with entering the army. Respondents reported that their ROTC training was relatively adequate and provided them with necessary skills, although there was some concern about the apathy shown by some ROTC instructors based on instructors' own army experiences. Sensing this apathy caused young officers to be "on guard" rather than fully assimilating when arriving at their first assignments. These comments varied based on the respondents' pre-army preparation.

## Job Assignments

A factor in determining success is one's job assignment. The basic requirements, as articulated in Army Regulation 600-3, are training at a branch-specific school and assignment to a unit where the individual will normally serve in a position leading soldiers (either in tactical or support operations). With few exceptions, officers are expected to spend their initial assignment with troops (soldiers). Many will also serve in an assistant staff officer job at the battalion or brigade level. This basic level assignment hones the officer's tactical and technical acumen and begins the socialization and assimilation process.

Among African American officers, there has been much debate as to whether their progression through the ranks is comparable with that of their white counterparts. There are concerns about competing for certain key jobs—command and primary staff at brigade, division, and corps levels. Even when a job at this level is secured, African Americans say they are left feeling inadequate because of the lack of support from other staff and have the impression that some latent racism is to blame (in light of their areas of performance being perfected). This sense does not diminish as the officer progresses. In fact, the need to prove oneself magnifies with each advance in rank, causing undue stress on the officer associated with the continuous need to prove oneself. Errors in judgement or

other mistakes made by African Americans are heightened and often blown out of proportion relative to those made by their white counterparts. Such errors appear to be dealt with more harshly when corrective measures are taken.

The staffing at the division and corps levels lacks an adequate representation of African Americans in operational positions, which are stepping stones to future key jobs and promotions. The necessity of more adequately preparing the officer at this developmental phase cannot be understated. Solid preparation at this point is essential for any officer who seeks the opportunity to fill key Pentagon policy-making jobs or positions interfacing with Congress or the White House.

After the initial assignment, officers attend their branch-producing officer advanced course (varying lengths). Within the next three to five years, most will command a company—a crucial gate. This job has been shown by past boards to

"Where did you command your company? (as a Captain or Lieutenant)"					
	Male %	Female %			
TRADOC	11.6	17.6			
FORSCOM	37.2	23.5			
PACOM	1.2	0.0			
AMC	1.2	0.0			
Korea	8.1	29.4			
Europe	25.6	11.8			
MDW	4.7	5.9			
Other	2.3	0.0			
N/A	4.7	11.8			
Missing	3.5	0.0			
N=	86	17			
African American Officer Response to Survey, 1998					

determine the officer's glide paths toward future placement in key jobs and

command at the lieutenant colonel and colonel level. It is at this juncture where the process for determining one's future potential begins. The officer's efficiency report (OER) is the single document that promotion boards rely on to make a recommendation.

Most officers will serve in a variety of locations during their army career. The most desirable mix is tactical and non-tactical and higher level staff positions at either the joint or army staff level. The early preparation determines the later outcome.

The surveys we administered to African American officers asked them to list the type of jobs they held at each grade from 01-06 and comment on inequities in assignments. There is a general belief that African Americans are not being assigned competitive jobs commensurate with those assigned to their white counterparts. As discussed earlier, traditional "tough" locations do have a representative number of African American officers, but whether they acquire merited jobs once arriving at the duty station is another matter.

"As a Captain, what jobs did you have?"						
Female %						
82.4	Staff					
0.0						
0.0						
17.6						
0.0						
Missing 1.2 0.0  African American Officer Response to Survey, 1998						

Overall, the officers believe assignment inequities do exist. Additionally, there is a feeling that some army commands are overrepresented. Location is one part of a two-part problem. Part two of the challenge is that of job placement. On the surface, these African American officers were filling jobs required by the

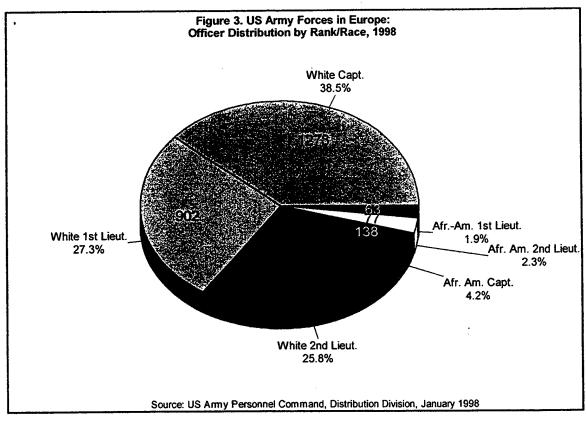
professional development model, that is, platoon leader, assistant battalion/brigade staff, and commanders.

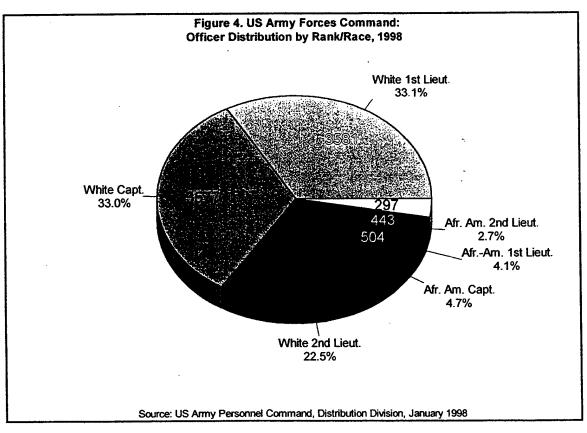
For purposes of location comparison, I analyzed four major army commands, two overseas and two stateside. The four commands are Forces Command (FORSCOM); Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC); United States Army Europe (USAREUR); and United States Forces, Korea (Korea). African American officers, at the earlier levels (lieutenant to captain) make up 11.6 percent of the army's war-fighting command in FORSCOM, although their representation is most apparent at the rank of captain. They represent 16.7 percent of the officers in TRADOC and 14.3 percent in Korea. Representation in USAREUR was the lowest of all commands, at 8.4 percent. (See figures 3 through 6.)

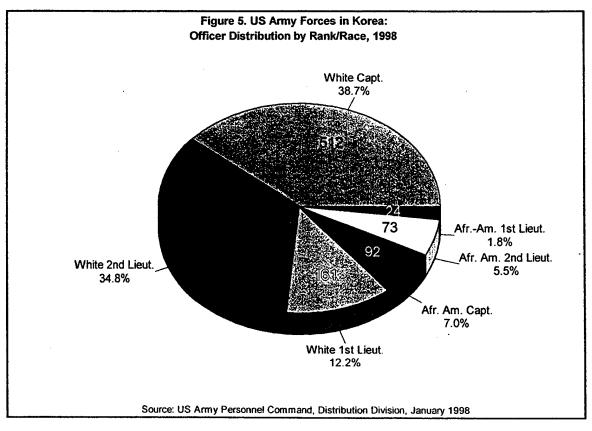
An officer's preparation in a command location with a combat or combatsupport mission is desirable in that it prepares the individual to assume key warfighting positions leading to a higher probability of a promotion to the general officer ranks. The army has no category of jobs or locations that are classified as good or bad. Officers are always advised to perform to the best of their ability regardless of the assignment, and a less desirable job performed well has always been considered as better than a so-called high visibility job not performed well.

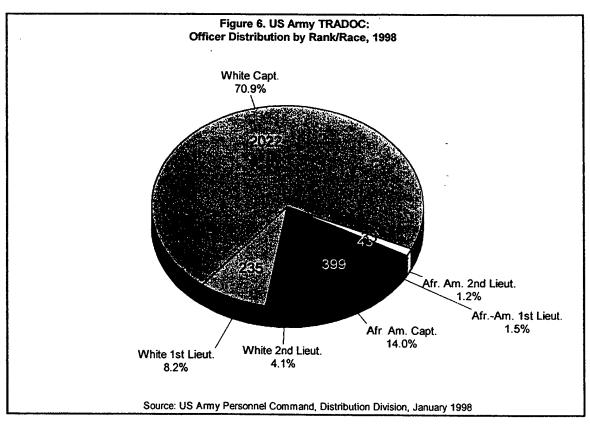
Some job locations and positions may hold greater prestige than others based on their lineage, and there is a great desire by officers to be assigned to those locations. Locations providing the officer an opportunity to serve in tactical commands and staff at battalion, brigade, division or corps levels are desirable because they prepare officers for future high-level assignments. Nevertheless, prestige does not negate the importance of high performance, and promotion and success are not necessarily correlated with assignment to one of these desirable units, although officers assigned in such locations do have a greater probability of succeeding.

Since African Americans represent 11 percent of the overall officer corps,









some argument could be made that the representative mix of officers by race should not exceed that percentage. If and when it becomes necessary to exceed the baseline percentage, overrepresentation should occur in locations offering a greater degree of success and promotion possibilities as reflected by promotion board statistics. But in fact, African Americans are overrepresented in the least desirable commands and underrepresented in the most desirable ones.

## Mentoring

The fourth significant area in the advancement of all officers was the area of mentoring. According to author Kathy Kram, a mentor can be defined as "a trusted counselor who accepts a guiding role in the development of a younger or less-experienced member of the organization."<sup>21</sup> The mentor has a developmental role as part of a caring, sharing, and helping relationship where one person invests time, know-how, and effort in enhancing another person's growth, knowledge, and skills, and responds to critical needs in the life of that person in ways that prepare the individual for greater productivity or achievement in the future.

Mentoring in the army is obviously vital and necessary. While no formal program exists, ideas are exchanged between seniors and juniors in the army on a continuous basis. In some circles, however, mentoring can also have negative connotations. The protégé, in a mentor relationship, may carry a label that can be harmful, depending on the success of the mentor. Nevertheless, the army as an institution recognizes that the advantages of mentoring outweigh the drawbacks. General Ulmer points out that "a formal program of mentoring can assist in the developmental process and in assignment and selection. Mentoring and coaching have long been in the army lexicon, but their routine use is a localized phenomenon, highly dependent on the interests and skills of unit leaders."<sup>22</sup>

In years past, young black officers would be asked if they had a "godfather." There would be little explanation offered and many African Americans lacked an understanding of this term since they were outside the

sphere where establishing a mentor/protégé relationship was possible. By contrast, white officers for well over a decade have come to expect mentorship as routine.

"Do you have a mentor?"						
	Yes	No	N=			
03 - Capt %	64.7	35.3	34			
04 - Major %	63.0	37.0	27			
05 - Lt Col %	41.7	58.3	36			
06 - Col %	33.3	66.7	6			
African American Officer Response to Survey, 1998						

More than 45 percent of the African American officers in our survey reported that they had never had a mentor. This was more likely to be the case among lieutenant colonels and colonels. When asked in the same survey whether they would define a mentor as (1) "someone who chooses you" (47.6 percent) or (2) "someone you choose" (30.8 percent), the answers varied. Of those responding, 26.8 percent answered that a mentor could be both. Most admitted that they did not know what a mentor was when they entered active duty. This is not surprising considering the high percentage of individuals who do not have a mentor.

"Do you believe a mentor is?"						
	Someone You Choose	Someone Who Chooses You	Both	n/a	N=	
03 - Capt %	29.4	35.3	32.4	2.9	34	
04 - Major %	25.9	25.9	48.1	0.0	27	
05 - Lt Col %	11.1	44.4	41.7	2.8	36	
06 - Col %	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	6	
	African America	n Officer Response to	o Survey, 19	998	.k	

Discussion in the focus groups conducted in January 1998, consisting of junior African Americans, highlighted the fact that this one area could use much improvement if the condition of African Americans—from recruitment to assimilation and progression through the ranks—was to improve. The lack of mentoring led many African American officers to feel they were not on an even playing field when they graduated from college and attended their basic course.

In a separate survey, 90 percent of white officers "strongly agreed" with the statement that "African Americans are more likely to choose other African Americans as mentors." White officers were not concerned by this but felt that choosing someone like oneself (not necessarily along racial lines) was quite normal. This bears an interesting resemblance to the outlook of senior white officers in the position of choosing other officers to work under or alongside them.

According to a report in *The Washington Post*, based on interviews with several army generals, army leaders nearly always exclude female officers when appointing aides. While the article did not address ethnic categories, it is apparent to the reader that African Americans are also an excluded population. The article points out that "like the generals they serve, all but one aide are white." This pattern seems to hold true not only for the generals interviewed by the *Post* but for nearly all army generals. The article further notes that the position of aide-de-camp "is a strong predictor of success: one-third of the Army's 307 generals were aides early in their careers, and many recall the experience as a source of invaluable contacts and an incomparable first view of the inner workings of military command." The only general interviewed who had an African American aide was himself an African American. Although the aide position is a "strong predictor of success," it is certainly not necessary for promotion to senior ranks. Two-thirds of the generals had never been aides, a fact that did not seem to affect their later success.

If there is a belief that an informal system of mentoring exists, then how

do we make that system work for everyone? The army, unlike civilian corporations, must strive to maintain a balance. How much of an informal system can or will individuals endure if they perceive inequities at every turn? A formal system for mentoring could enhance the army, where the nature of leadership lends itself well to such an effective process. The army's enduring values can only be strengthened when people feel there are systems in place that allow for the development of everyone.

Since the officer's crucial formative phase is while in the institution of higher learning (college and/or the Academy), the mentoring relationship has to be formalized here and sustained throughout the officer's career. This has implications for the mentor, who is expected to be someone with a knowledge of how the system works. The role model has to fit the army's model of excellence (whatever model we subscribe to). The mentor, because of his/her success, or lack thereof, will affect the thinking of the individual for years to come. This may suggest that not everyone can be a mentor in the truest sense of the word, especially in ROTC.

•	Male %	Female %
Yes	23.3	41.2
No	75.6	58.8
n/a	1.2	0.0
N=	86	17

To quote again from Kathy Kram, "mentoring functions can be defined as: sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility coaching, protection, challenging assignments." Let us use some possible scenarios to spell out each of these functions.

Sponsorship involves personal attention. Given the mentor's role in the organization and at meetings where decisions are made, the mentor can promote the protégé by recognizing their efforts. The challenge here for African Americans is their placement in army jobs where they can have an impact—position power. This involves assignment to both army staff and to Joint staff and the Department of Defense. With today's representation, this leaves the white officer as the most available sponsor for the African American. The danger in this is the unlikelihood that the white officer will voluntarily make such a sponsorship choice. Race should not be an issue in spite of the fact that according to the white officers surveyed, African Americans seek out other African Americans as mentors and whites believe this to be appropriate. The reality is that the limited numbers will not afford African American juniors the luxury of being mentored exclusively by senior African Americans. This mindset will have to be altered.

"If you have answered yes to the question (Do you have a mentor?), what race is your mentor?"							
	Cauc.	AfAm.	Cauc/Af. Am.	Cauc./Af Am./other	n/a	No Response	N=
03 - Capt %	0.0	52.9	11.8	0.0	35.3	0.0	34
04 - Major %	7.4	40.7	11.1	3.7	37.0	0.0	27
05 - Lt Col %	11.1	22.2	8.3	0.0	55.6	2.8	36
06 - Col %	16.7	16.7	0.0	0.0	66.7	0.0	6

If you ask the assignment officers or past assignments' officers, they will tell you that "by-name" requests for African Americans are less than one percent. This process for requesting officers is a longstanding and accepted practice.

Therefore, if we look to the mentor as the sponsor, it is not likely that a representative number of African Americans will be mentored in requesting

assignments to army staff or Joint positions. Training will require more focused teaching on how to mentor different ethnic groups.

Exposure-and-visibility. This function is defined "as a senior decision to place the junior in a position that gives him exposure to higher-level management." Exposure and visibility cause the junior to be a recognized leader and can accelerate his potential for gaining positions otherwise closed to him. The visibility is expected to provide critical learning experiences from the senior's standpoint. There is an attendant danger to this function as well. If the junior fails, it can detract from the mentor's reputation. Again, the dichotomy here is the availability of a pool of African Americans in key positions who can accelerate the young officer.

Coaching. The function of coaching is quite similar to the existing leader's role of coaching and teaching in today's army. This would be the area we would align with teaching the army culture and for offering suggestions and alternatives for reaching specific career goals. As Kram phrases it, following a football analogy, "The role of coach is to teach the plays." The coach can help with organizational norms and politics as well. The needs of the novice, the new lieutenant, and the more seasoned and experienced officer differ, but the coach's role does not change. The individual without a coach is at an extreme disadvantage.

Protection. The function of protection is the key. There are points in the career of a young officer (a new lieutenant for example) where the skills needed to fully assimilate are not present. Acting in the protection role, the mentor ensures that the individual's introduction to senior leaders is well timed.<sup>28</sup> It is expected that the new lieutenant will make mistakes. The army is not a zero-tolerance institution. Under the mentor's protective guidance, however, mistakes would not be of such a nature that they were unrecoverable. Kram offers this example: "The individual may have been given a project that the senior leader thought should have progressed a lot faster and with greater expectations for an end result. This

may not have happened. To prevent an early demise, the mentor, in his protection role, could shield the junior person."<sup>29</sup> The junior person is not always skilled enough to achieve a satisfactory outcome in a situation requiring considerably more skill and experience. The involvement should ensure that the junior is provided a chance to learn the ropes before taking on areas that could have a devastating impact.

Challenging assignments. While juniors should be prevented from moving too fast, ensuring challenging assignments as a mentor is extremely important. As Kram explains, "this prepares the officer for the future and ensures the organization has an appropriate pool of talent." Once the protégé has demonstrated mastery of particular area, the mentor may assign non-traditional roles or make recommendations for jobs that give greater exposure. Friction can often develop between the mentor and protégé because the protégé may feel overwhelmed. While the mentor may make extra demands of the junior individual to ensure that he is prepared for future challenges, this has to be made clear to the protégé in the coaching function.

The programs of the Army have been lauded as progressive and visionary when seeking and implementing solutions to correct perceived injustices. The climate of today's army is such that when brought to the attention of leadership, necessary changes are made to address and correct problems. Most recently, we have seen examples of the leadership's resolve when sexual harassment was uncovered at one of our army bases. While not readily apparent to the public, informal investigations are a matter of routine. The findings from such investigations normally undergo a legal review and commanders take appropriate action to resolve the matter.

Many of the recommendations proposed in the following pages derive from information in our surveys and ideas provided by focus group attendees. Any solution offered must be received with the understanding that there are many agencies and individuals involved in the resolution and fix. In addition, for any proposal to work, both African American and Caucasian officers will need to make adjustments. Present attitudes, perceptions, and general sentiments are not conducive to achieving the desired outcome. The top-down guidance of senior leaders will also be essential. This entire matter is important enough that everyone needs to take on a supportive role and play an active role toward improving our current system. The recommendations that follow fall under five broad headings: (1) Education; (2) Diversity training and army culture; (3) Identifying institutional discrimination; (4) Diversity management; and (5) Initial assignment and mentoring.

### Education

The education solution is threefold. First, apply the same advanced degree requirements for ROTC instructors as are required for West Point instructors. Second, inform and recruit individuals pursuing science and technical degrees.

more technical student. College recruitment efforts may also need to focus on high-school graduates who possess some capacity for training in the hard sciences; several ROTC scholarships could be designated for this group. The need for technical skills cannot be underscored enough.

The needs of the army must also be articulated to the larger population, using the media to ensure that the nation understands the army's future. African Americans would not want to be underrepresented in these fields and therefore would want to ensure stronger training in hard sciences. The education demand made on the army itself is twofold: (1) developing technical experts and (2) developing leaders who know the basic components of leading soldiers regardless of their specialty.

# Diversity Training and Army Culture

Diversity is here to stay. As such, army culture must embody the very real meaning of diversity and teaching army culture must come to be synonymous with teaching diversity. The demographic trends reflect the fact that by the year 2000, African Americans will represent at least 14.2 percent of the U.S. population, and more importantly, that 85 percent of all net entrants in the U.S. workforce will be women, African Americans, and immigrants, while white males will only comprise 15 percent. African Americans will continue to become increasingly important to the economic success of the United States, not only as workers and entrepreneurs but also as consumers.<sup>31</sup>

Existing equal opportunity training, as required, will need to be redesigned. Moreover, the equal opportunity training that exists for officers may have to be structured differently. At present, all training is the same, but the requirements for officers should differ because of the roles they are expected to play in the organization. During the conduct of several interviews for this study, white officers highlighted the need for improved training. Current training programs in Training and Doctrine Command require that officers attending

various service schools receive such training. This unique training is not required, however, once the officer is at a particular duty station. Indeed, for the most part officers do not attend equal opportunity training even though it appears on the training schedule. Officer development and the needs of the officer corps have always been recognized as requiring different skills, and equal opportunity training is no different.

There are a number of hard issues that must be dealt with in an officer-only setting. This will force certain issues on the table and in an open forum. For example, a recommendation was offered during our focus group interviews that a public relations effort may be needed to remove the negativism associated with being an equal opportunity advisor or representative. The culture solution involves an attitude adjustment and an understanding of diversity and its importance to fully incorporating all officers fully into the programs of the army.

The existing equal opportunity programs have paid dividends in the past. When there were alterations to the program, oversight may have been lacking but overall, the process in place was sound. Understanding the history of army culture makes it clear that we must strengthen our diversity programs.

# Identifying Institutional Discrimination

The army must provide clearer guidance to promotion boards delineating a definition for institutional discrimination if it is going to require board members to identify "patterns of discrimination." The army currently defines institutional discrimination as: "A different treatment of individuals in an organization which:

(a) occurs based on race, color, religion, gender or national origin: (b) results from the normal functioning of the organizations; (c) operates to the consistent disadvantage of a particular group." This definition, however, leads to legal interpretations and subjective evaluation of what constitutes discrimination on a case-by-case basis. In fact, promotion boards grapple with the definition and current interpretations vary. The use of the term as a reason for one's failure to

succeed therefore is rarely, if ever, stated. Does being wronged necessarily imply discrimination? After all, these cases are investigated by trained equal opportunity personnel who also obtain a legal review.

## Managing Diversity

The recommendations offered here align with successful programs currently in place in corporate America. The U.S. Army is not unlike corporate America in the challenges it faces integrating minorities into its ranks. Successful corporate diversity management programs tend to have the following in common:

- Top management's involvement is high.
- The corporation provides a supportive culture.
- Employees are actively involved.
- The process of institutionalizing change is ongoing.
- Top management has the ability to evaluate progress and modify policies,
   as appropriate.<sup>33</sup>

Why is top management involvement important? If not clearly articulated and then followed by an action plan, an organization's resolve on matters of diversity goes unnoticed and subordinate agencies do only what is minimally necessary. The oversight requirements may wane, as they did in the Department of Defense in the 1980s. When staff reductions are sought, the office of equal opportunity is often a bill payer. According to the Task Force on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:

In the period of 1980-1985, The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Equal Opportunity suffered a staff reduction and lost all but one of its equal opportunity staff allocations. By 1986, the office was abolished. Other offices absorbed its functions. In the late 1970s, the Army abolished its full-time equal opportunity Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and stopped assigning officers to installation EO offices.<sup>34</sup>

The intensive monitoring that was present in the 1970s and the contact

with services became limited to informal contact. This crucial period may have been the time when ground was lost in promotion assignment and schooling.

Corporate examples also show that a supportive culture is necessary for any program of diversity to succeed. In this regard, the longstanding tradition of the army has been slow to bring about real change. We have seen a number of policies written that speak well to our programs and we have seen attempts to ensure assignment and promotion equity, but even today ongoing involvement on the part of senior army leaders is weak despite signs of progress. Matters of affirmative action in our army culture would not be so controversial if there were generally a better understanding that no one advances who is not "best or fully qualified" to do so, regardless of the application of affirmative measures.

The army culture, as it exists, has failed in this regard. Our survey results reflect the sentiment of senior white officers who believe that affirmative action has been the cause for their failure to progress. Their perception, however, cannot be substantiated by the promotion or school select rates of whites as against those of African Americans. In fact, the opposite is true (see table below). Promotion percentages are higher for whites. Moreover, the data show that only rarely do promotion boards follow the guidance given them to select minorities and women at a rate equal to the overall board select rate. The fiscal year 1997 Command

Overall and African American Promotion Selection Rates								
	Captain		Major		Lieutenant Colonel		Colonel	
	Total %	AfAm.	Total	AfAm.	Total %	AfAm.	Total %	AfAm.
1997	98.0	96.2	74.2	65.1	59.8	46.3	39.0	19.1
1996	93.0	88.3	73.3	62.5	60.0	42.3	41.2	35.6
1995	91.5	85.0	73.2	66.0	60.9	46.3	44.4	38.5

Board statistics show that African Americans represent only 10.7 percent of all army commands officers. The belief among white officers that inequities weigh against them, combined with the belief among African Americans that similar inequities harm them, fuel distrust and have prevented the growth of bonafide relationships between ethnic groups.

The next similarity with the corporate approach is active employee involvement for ensuring that issues, as viewed by a particular segment, are addressed. This involvement improves the organization's potential for developing successful individuals—future managers and leaders. It encourages active mentor relationships as well as the formulation of professional groups for ensuring that appropriate development and oversight are in place.

David Kearns, the chairman of Xerox, recognized that in his company's efforts, getting people into the pipeline was not enough. Working closely with the Black Managers Network, Kearns spearheaded the Pivotal Job Concept. In this new process, the resumes of persons holding the top jobs in the company were analyzed, and the career path each had taken to reach the top was identified. Kearns' program then specifically targeted positions for professionals of color and women consistent with their numbers in the organization.<sup>35</sup>

Gannett Company instituted a program it calls "Partners in Progress." In this effort, Gannett sets goals and measures managers' performance in recruiting, hiring, developing, and promoting women and minorities. It even ties managers' compensation to their success in achieving equal employment opportunity results. The company trains promotable women and people of color, making use of management development programs and external seminars. Its own EEO Advisory Committee, composed of division presidents, reviews Gannett's progress and recommends areas for focus.<sup>36</sup>

Another company where an organization exists solely to address issues regarding African Americans is Corning Glass. This company established the Society of Black Professionals in 1980 to address matters of upward mobility for

African Americans. They recognized that early identification and development of African Americans was crucial in preparing them to assume key management positions in the future.

In comments made to a Diversity in Defense Forum in 1994, General Gordon Sullivan, the former army chief of staff, said this: "Diversity, simply stated, is the right thing to do."<sup>37</sup> As we talk about diversity for all people, we will need to put "teeth" into the program. This is not simply reporting statistics to the Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Office, but also ensuring that the officer on the ground recognizes the value of diversity to the army.

The army has no officially named organization whose functions are similar to those of the corporate networking organizations. One organization, however, that has existed for 33 years doing similar work at a less formal level is ROCKS. ROCKS has been extremely vital in addressing the concerns of African Americans to the senior leadership of the army. Its programs are uniquely shaped to ensure that all officers (its membership is predominantly African American) receive vital information that will enhance their role in the army. Many success stories relayed by African American officers today are tied to some interaction they had with ROCKS while in ROTC. ROCKs members are requested throughout the school year to visit ROTC campuses in various capacities, in a mentor role and to serve as guest speakers. In the last 10 years, the organization has received more visibility than at any time since its inception. Today, army leadership interfaces with and regularly requests advice from ROCKS on matters regarding African Americans.

ROCKS can help in formalizing the process of diversity management and mentoring. The programs it has in place, as outlined in its bylaws, are designed to ease the transition problems African Americans face. The organization is not well understood by white officers, however, and its existence is often viewed by many as more negative than positive. Depending on the circle or environment, white officers will publicly verbalize their concern with the organization, but few

substantive reasons are offered. When you liken the organization to the West Point Association, the Women Officers Association, or the Defense Advisory Council on Women in the Service (DACOWITS), its role and significance are much easier to understand—and accept. The scrutiny of ROCKS by white officers has caused a diminishing interest in the organization among junior African American officers. Many fear their affiliation with it will have career-ending implications. Thus, any association is "secret." While satellite organizations are forming at large army installations, their viability cannot yet be assessed.

ROCKS will remain a credible organization if army leadership underwrites its goals and objectives. This importance and relevance have to be on par with that of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) and other private organizations that lobby for the army. Although ROCKS has made great strides in terms of its role in African American preparation, it will not be fully effective until it is afforded the status given to such groups as DACOWITS, whose role in womens issues is vital and has led to change in many policies affecting women. The parallel need here is for the requirement for reporting and oversight that DACOWITS has as an agency and through its through link with the Secretary of Defense.

# Initial/Early Assignment and Mentoring

The Military Personnel Center should devise a method for reviewing the assignment and performance file of the officer corps to ensure equity in officers' early assignments. This review would allow early identification of patterns that inhibit success and provide ample opportunity for appropriate policy changes. The findings should be presented to the commander of PERSCOM on an annual basis, and where there were noted problems, management by individuals could become necessary. At some point in the early career of an officer, there might be a requirement to determine if individual evaluation reports are lower for the African American. This, too, may necessitate management of individual files.

This would place a demand on our already overworked personnel management system; however, the importance of a balanced force and fairness cannot be understated.

Finally, we must move to formalize mentoring. The function of the mentor in the initial assignment may eliminate or at least improve perceptions that are present in the officer corps. The new officer's efficiency report is designed to require senior/subordinate interaction. This may seem to serve as a form of mentorship, since it meets the intent for rendering an evaluation of an officer at some later date. However, it does not encourage the sponsorship aspects of a developing or developed mentor/protégé role. The process of mentoring is much too complex for addressing all the components during evaluation counseling. In fact, we have always suffered from a reluctance by juniors to be completely frank when discussing matters with their raters.

Not only must the process of mentoring be formalized but the requirements for doing so effectively must be taught in some forum. Mentoring is not universally understood—its effectiveness is only as good as the individual providing the counsel. Moreover, we must extend mentoring functions to subordinates no matter what the race. African Americans cannot be expected to mentor only African American officers. There are not sufficient numbers of African Americans to provide informed and continuous feedback. While white officers responded in our survey that they felt it was perfectly all right and to be expected that a subordinate African American would seek out the counsel of another African American, this is not a workable alternative for an ongoing mentoring program. Mentoring functions cannot be solely a like-race matter. If they were, there would not be enough senior minorities to mentor the junior minorities.

The mentoring process will work, finally, if there is a means for measuring its success. Using some tools of corporate diversity, the evaluation report could

offer an effective means for capturing the success of the program, including the use of organizations such as ROCKS to interface with army leadership.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

No meaningful discussion of the future is possible without a discussion of the present. I have purposely not dealt with tomorrow as an end state because its relevance is not nearly as important as where the African American is today. Today's refinements will enhance tomorrow's army. In no way do I mean to diminish our army as an honorable profession. It is as good a profession as any other. Its programs, while they may not be perfect, are better than most. While people issues will remain extremely critical in moving the army into the next millennium, the fact that we exist to fight and win our nation's wars must be kept at the forefront.

This paper has highlighted areas that require attention, namely, ROTC assignment and selection of instructors, education and army culture, and mentoring as a formalized process. African Americans want to serve their country without the ever-present fear of race as a detriment to success. They wear their uniform with pride and they take their role as officers very seriously. In spite of all the good, today's African American and white officers are extremely disgruntled about racial issues. Both groups have valid concerns. African American representation in officer ranks is inadequate, and more troubling is the army treatment of certain racial issues, especially those affecting African Americans. One need only look at key leadership positions to surmise that African Americans do not hold any of the key army staff and deputy positions. Elevation in rank is one aspect of progress. Being able to bring about change because of one's position is quite another.

The responses to our survey also are cause for concern. The number of white officers who believe African Americans are promoted because of race and not competency is disturbing. These attitudes result in other unhealthy behaviors that do not need to exist among warriors. We must move as well to address concerns about institutional discrimination. Even white officers say it is present.

The stigmas associated with undergraduate attendance at HBCUs, for example, must be removed, and every attempt to ensure that officers are on an even playing field must receive priority.

No discussion of African American issues is complete, nor can any policy regarding African Americans be successful, without addressing concerns of both racial groups. We must decide to put systems into place to gauge performance of various groups, including minorities and women, at various phases along the career path and alter our behavior where we find trouble spots. Some revisions in the way things are done is needed throughout the system. We can take what we have and improve.

It is time we made a resolve to put teeth into our programs. With appropriate changes, we can hope to be lauded, as in times past, as having the best, most robust diversity programs of any agency. African Americans will continue to serve proudly and they will continue to work toward solutions to enhance the army's diversity management. Racial disharmony is counterproductive for our army and our nation. Our leadership is supportive of diversity programs. The people who make up our great army must stand behind the leadership if we are to launch a truly successful program.

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